

Westmount

Discovery Time Preschool

Parent Handbook

2021-2022

Welcome!

Welcome to Westmount Discovery Time Preschool, a preschool for children ages 3-5. We are a non-profit program of the Westmount Community League, licensed as a preschool with Alberta Children and Youth Services (through the regional Child and Family Service Authority).

This handbook has been prepared to outline school policies and answer questions frequently asked by parents. A copy of this handbook is available on the "Registration" page of our website, at www.discoverytime.ca.

Discovery Time Preschool has operated for more than 25 years. We welcome students of all backgrounds and languages. The Preschool operates on a "Learning through Play" philosophy. Under the guidance of our teachers, children engage in playful learning activities that enhance their physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth and development. The program builds a firm foundation for success in later school years.

By attending Discovery Time Preschool, your child will learn to:

- express thoughts, feelings and ideas;
- manage his/her behaviour in a group setting;
- cooperate, compromise, and show empathy;
- become more independent; and
- form lasting friendships.

As parents of a child registered at Discovery Time Preschool, you are members of a parent-led preschool, which means that the success of the school depends on your commitment and dedication throughout the year. Parents are required to be actively involved in their children's education through participation in classroom helper days and by assuming a parent position.

Parents and teaching staff work together to achieve common goals, the most important of which is to provide a happy, satisfying preschool experience for our children. This partnership can strengthen and enhance the quality of your child's first experience in an organized social learning situation.

For each child you have registered in the Preschool, your annual responsibilities are to:

- participate on the Discovery Time Committee or in one of the various parent positions identified by the Preschool and/or teachers;
- assist with and participate in fundraising.

A variety of parent positions are summarized on page 10 and on the Discovery Time website. We look forward to having you with us!

COVID-19 continues to pose a health risk to Albertans. The Discovery Time teachers and parent committee are carefully following all guidelines laid out by the Alberta Government to minimize the risk of transmission to children and staff. The layout of the preschool and the daily routine will look different compared to previous years, and procedures will be in place to ensure good hygiene practices and proper sanitization. Please note that the functioning of the preschool is subject to change as the situation with COVID-19 evolves. The priority will always be the safety of children and staff.

Discovery Time Committee and Staff

Table of Contents

Welcome2

Organization of the Preschool 4

Parent Guidelines4

Philosophy: “Learning Through Play”5

Objectives: Children5

Objectives: Parents.....5

Program Eligibility

Three-year-old program.....6

Four-year-old program.....6

Mixed-age program.....6

School Term and Fees6

Registration.....7

Withdrawal from the Program7

Subsidy7

Child Guidance and Discipline7

Communication with Parents8

Dropping off and Picking up Students9

Clothing9

Special Helper Days.....10

Parent

Positions.....10

Food Policy and Allergies
.....10

Illness
.....11

Incident/Accident
.....12

Emergency Procedures
.....12

Organization of the Preschool

Parents of registered children are members of the Westmount Discovery Time Preschool. All members are required to attend the fall general meeting/introduction. This year we are looking to hold this meeting virtually. At this meeting, members of the Preschool elect the Discovery Time Committee for the following year, if necessary. The Discovery Time Committee performs both a governance and administrative function and is responsible to:

- apprise the Westmount Community League of all preschool operations/issues;
- conduct the business operations of the Preschool on behalf of the Westmount Community League and preschool members/parents;
- hire and supervise staff;
- spearhead fundraising initiatives;
- manage an annual budget; and
- ensure parents are informed about the ongoing operations of the Preschool.

For more information about committee member positions and responsibilities, please speak to the Volunteer Coordinator, or view the list on the preschool website.

Parent Guidelines

Please note the following important guidelines:

1. A parent from each family is required to assume a parent position. More information is available on page ten. If you do not complete the duties of your parent position, your parent position cheque will be cashed.
2. A community league membership is required for insurance purposes. They are available for sale online at efcl.org. The community league membership does not have to be specific to Westmount if you live in another community.
3. Email is our main form of communication with parents. Please ensure our Registrar has your up-to-date email address. If your child is going to be absent from school, please try to notify the teachers by phone before class begins: 780.761.2727.
4. Please be prompt in bringing your child to school and in picking him/her up after class. If you absolutely cannot avoid being late to pick up your child, call to inform staff as soon as possible.
5. If someone other than a parent is to pick up your child, please inform the teachers in advance. The alternate caregiver will be asked to provide photo identification before leaving with your child.
6. Notify teaching staff of any allergies and ensure all emergency medical information is up-to-date.
7. If your child may require medication to be administered at the school (e.g. for allergies or a pre-existing medical condition), please discuss this in detail with the teachers and provide all information in writing.
8. Please keep teaching staff informed of any event or change of routine at home that may affect your child's behaviour.
9. Children may not bring toys from home into the classroom, as this often invites conflict with other children.
10. We ask that you say good-bye and leave your child as soon as he/she enters the classroom. This allows all of the children to focus on the teachers' introduction to the day's activities. We will provide opportunities for family members to participate on special days!

Philosophy: “Learning through Play”

The staff and parents at Discovery Time Preschool believe that a happy “learning through play” approach fosters a child’s natural curiosity, growth and development. We provide a stimulating and safe environment where children are given free time each day to explore, learn and discover at their own pace.

We also believe that children benefit from guided learning experiences such as story time, circle time, craft/activity of the day, and the introduction to the alphabet. We offer a literature-rich environment in which quality books are read daily and are incorporated into all themes and activities. Through stories, songs, rhymes, games and fun activities, we aim to build upon each child’s phonemic awareness, book awareness, and early literacy skills. We hope to expand upon each child’s love of books, and the pleasure they give us.

Our teaching staff promotes a sense of inquiry, and develops curricular content and programming around the children’s expressed interests. While many learning opportunities are structured in a group setting, the individual needs and abilities of each child are always taken into consideration.

We believe that children thrive in an environment that has rules and guidelines based on trust and respect. We also believe that every child has the right to feel valued and important. It is our role as adults to provide them with opportunities to feel good about themselves, setting them up for success by building their confidence and self-esteem. We believe that children will be excited to learn when they are given positive feedback and encouragement. In order to grow and learn, children need opportunities to make choices and assume responsibility for these choices.

We also hope to broaden children’s understanding about themselves and others, and to teach them to respect individual differences by providing an environment where each child’s uniqueness is respected and celebrated.

Objectives of the Preschool

For children

- To give children the opportunity to play with peers in a play-based educational setting.
- To help children feel secure in accepting help and guidance from adults outside their home.
- To provide children with opportunities to explore and to experiment with a wider variety of materials than is available in most homes.
- To present activities that will foster growth and development and expand their interests.
- To prepare children to make their own choices and get ready to participate actively in their own education.
- To provide children with opportunities to practice social skills.

For parents

- To help parents gain insight into their child’s behaviour.
- To provide parents with an opportunity to learn new ways of meeting the needs of their children, both in school and at home.
- To help parents see how they can foster a child’s increasing independence and creative exploration.
- To demonstrate how to keep activities relevant to a child’s stage of development.
- To provide for a co-operative relationship with the school.

Program Eligibility

Three-year-old program:

- Children must be three years of age no later than December 31 in any given school year. A spot will be held if all fees are paid.
- Children in this program must be toilet trained.

Four-year-old program:

- Children eligible for this program must be four years of age no later than February 28 in any given school year. If this requirement is met, a child may begin the program when he/she is still three.
- Children in this program must be toilet trained.

Mixed-age program (three to five years old):

- Children eligible for this program must be three years of age no later than December 31 in any given school year and can be up to and including kindergarten age. Children in this program must be toilet trained.

School Term and Fees

Discovery Time Preschool operates from mid-September to mid-June. We follow the Edmonton Public School calendar; there are no classes on statutory holidays, public school holidays, and teachers' convention. The school is, however, open on public school Professional Development (PD) days.

Fees are calculated according to the number of school days the school is open and operating. The total is divided equally over the ten school months. Monthly fees for the various classes are:

Age, Days/Week, Time, Monthly Fee

3, Tues & Thurs, 9:00 am – 11:30 am, \$140

4, MWF, 9:00 am – 11:30 am, \$195

Mixed age, Tues & Thurs, 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm, \$140

Mixed age, MWF, 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm, \$195

Mixed age, MTWThF, 12:30 pm – 3:00 pm, \$325

Please note the following:

- Post-dated cheques for the entire school term are due upon registration. If you are unable to meet this requirement, please speak to the Committee Treasurer to make alternate arrangements. You may also submit one cheque for the whole year rather than ten post-dated cheques.
- 2 undated cheques, each in the amount of \$150, are required, and will only be deposited if your volunteer or fundraising obligations are not fulfilled.
- Cheques are to be made out to Westmount Community League and dated for the 1st of each month.
- Fees are payable in full whether or not your child attends all classes. Fees are not refunded for illness or holidays.
- A \$50.00 charge will be applied to all NSF cheques
- In the event of a mandatory school closure part way through the month, fees will not be refunded for that month.

- A \$120/year cleaning fee can be paid in full at the beginning of the year, or in two installments dated September 1 and January 1.

Registration

- Registration fees are \$75 per family. This fee is non-refundable and is not reduced if you join the preschool after September.
- The Westmount Community League and Discovery Time Preschool reserve the right to make changes to fees.

Withdrawal from the Program

To withdraw your child from the program, you must notify the Registrar, in writing, at least one calendar month in advance. Notice is to be given on or before the first of the month preceding (e.g. on or before October 1 for a November 1 withdrawal). If a child is withdrawn during the school year, remaining tuition will be refunded upon receipt of 30 days advance notice. Your child may attend school during the entire notice period.

The final date to give notice of withdrawal is March 1 for an April 1 withdrawal. No tuition will be refunded for the months of May and June.

Please note that if your child is registered for September, but you wish to withdraw, you must do so before August 15 in order to receive September fees. After August 15, the one-month notice period applies and the September fees will not be refunded.

Responsibilities During Withdrawal Notice Period

Your classroom helper day and parent position commitments must continue during the notice period. Failure to complete any classroom or parent position duties during the notice period will result in one or both of your \$150 deposit cheques being cashed. Note: If you have not completed your parent position duties before you withdraw, your \$150 parent position deposit cheque will be cashed.

Subsidy

Subsidies are available from the Government of Alberta through the Child Care Subsidy Program. If you have questions about the subsidy, or would like to apply, please contact the Government of Alberta subsidy program directly. Contact information and online forms are available on the Government of Alberta website at <https://applychildcaresubsidy.alberta.ca/>

Child Guidance and Discipline

The first step in achieving good behaviour and discipline is prevention. The children are provided with a positive atmosphere that includes different play area options, planning for a variety of needs and abilities, and positive role modelling. Teachers and parent helpers use the following techniques to foster a positive environment:

- explain behavioural expectations and give clear directions;
- give instructions using a pleasant but firm tone of voice;

- use preventive and re-directive methods whenever possible; and
- encourage children to work out conflicts on their own - with adult modelling and support when necessary, keeping an open mind, calm demeanour and using positive statements and remarks.

Throughout the day, the teachers and parent helpers model appropriate behaviour; provide gentle reminders while pointing out natural and logical consequences; and reward positive behaviour while helping all children to make good choices.

Behavioural expectations are conveyed verbally to the children as daily reminders and by engaging them in conversations about positive ways to interact. For example, "How do we play with our school friends? Do we share? Do we help one another? Do we use our friendly voices?". The teachers may use visual representations on posters to help children remember some of the expectations (such as keeping hands to ourselves, no hitting or kicking, etc.).

To maintain a happy and secure environment for everyone, children will not be allowed to be excessively disruptive or to hurt others or damage property. Where a situation appears to be leading to conflict, teaching staff will redirect a child's attention, initiate problem solving dialogue, and/or substitute a more acceptable alternative.

Behaviour problems will be documented and discussed with a child's parent. Effort will be made to work with the family to resolve behavioural issues. If no progress is made, the teachers will decide whether the child should remain in the program. In making this decision, the teachers will consider the impact of the child's behaviour on other students, the likelihood of the child's behaviour improving, and the amount of support that can realistically be provided to the child and his/her family.

In order to ensure a consistent approach to discipline, parent helpers are asked to follow the guidelines presented above. At no time is physical force, isolation, angry yelling, or humiliation tolerated in the classroom from staff or parents. If you are unsure about appropriate methods of discipline to use within the classroom, please ask the teaching staff for assistance.

Communication with Parents

Discovery Time Preschool encourages an open communication between parents, teaching staff, and the Discovery Time Committee. Communication to parents is usually through notices that are placed in your child's mailbox or distributed through e-mail. Notices may also be posted at the entrance of the main classroom, on the bulletin board outside the classroom door, on the website www.discoverytime.ca, on Facebook, and in the HiMama app we are using. It is your responsibility to ensure that you (and any other primary caregivers of your child) read notices provided.

If you have concerns or questions about your child's progress or behaviour, please bring them to the teachers' attention. As it can be difficult to talk at drop-off or pick-up times, feel free to set up a time to talk with the teachers outside of class time. This way, the teachers may devote their full attention to your concerns and potential solutions.

Comments and concerns regarding the preschool program may be addressed to the teachers. Questions or suggestions about the administration of the school should be directed to the Discovery Time Committee. There is a list of committee members and contact information posted on the bulletin board in the hall as well as all contact info is on our website www.discoverytime.ca

***Discovery Time Preschool supports an environment of respect and dignity for its students, their families and our staff. Abuse, including abusive communication, of any kind towards staff and students and their families will not be tolerated. As a program that requires high family involvement, respectful communication between involved families is necessary to ensure the successful functioning of the

program. Parents who do not respect the rules outlined in this parent handbook will be asked to leave the preschool, and withdraw their child(ren). ***

Dropping off and Picking Up Students

Drop off and pick up procedures will be done in such a manner as to support physical distancing. This will likely involve outdoor drop-offs, or staggered drop-off times during inclement weather. Parents are responsible for waiting with their child until received by the teacher. Morning classes are held from 9:00 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. and afternoon classes are held from 12:40 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., unless otherwise instructed.

Please let staff know in advance if someone other than a parent will be picking up your child. This person will be required to provide photo identification before leaving with your child.

Discovery Time Preschool does not provide before or after class guardianship. Once you have signed out your child, the teachers are no longer responsible for your child. Please respect our teachers by picking up your child promptly.

Please note: if you are consistently or excessively late picking up your child, the Discovery Time Committee will be asked to review the pattern. You may be asked to leave the Preschool if the pattern continues.

Playground Policy

Should you remain with your child in the outdoor play areas around the preschool to socialize or play after class, it is necessary to continue to follow the established playground etiquette as taught to the students by the teachers. These rules are in place for the well-being of the preschool classes; consistency is key in molding young minds to think about fair, safe and fun play.

- Hands to yourself. No wrestling, hitting, or grabbing onto clothes.
- Playground boundaries include the sidewalks to the east and west, the white fence to the south and the preschool wall to the north. No children are allowed around the building. Also, no children are allowed on the hills by the parking lot.
- Toys or items found outside are not “finders keepers”. We will try to find out who they belong to.

Clothing

Our program offers messy opportunities! Children learn by hands-on manipulation and sensory explorations. Please dress your child appropriately so that they are comfortable and able to fully participate in activities that may get messy. We do provide water resistant aprons and paint shirts.

Each child must have a pair of clean indoor shoes for the classroom. Please label your child’s footwear, outdoor wear and backpacks, as several children often have the same type of clothing/footwear. While you may wish to have a set of extra clothes in your child’s backpack in case of emergencies, the preschool has some “emergency” clothing available for borrowing. If your child goes home with preschool clothing items, please ensure that they are cleaned then returned as soon as possible.

We go outside on as many days as possible, so please dress your child accordingly for the cold (hat, mittens, coat, snow pants, boots, etc.) and the heat (sunhat, sunscreen, etc.). Sunscreen should be applied before your child comes to school, as time does not allow for the teachers to take on this duty.

Special Helper Days

Students will be given several opportunities throughout the year to be the classroom “Special Helper”. On these days, the student will help lead various classroom activities, and will be able to present a special item from home for show and share. In previous years, parents or guardians were encouraged to volunteer in the classroom when their child was the “Special Helper”. Under the Alberta Government’s current guidelines, it is strongly recommended that parents not volunteer in the classroom. We regret any disappointment this may cause for parents/guardians and their children. The teachers will make every effort to ensure your child has a wonderful experience as the “Special Helper”.

Parent Positions

Registrants are required to perform a parent position. These positions ensure the smooth operation of the Preschool as this is a volunteer organized, non-profit community organization. Parent positions are distributed on a first-come, first-serve basis, and may include:

- Classroom Rep – one position for each class (4 positions)
- Toy Wash Coordinator – one position
- Toy Wash Participant – many positions
- Laundry Coordinator – two positions
- Recycling Coordinator – one position
- Scholastic Books Coordinator – one position
- Memory Book Coordinator – one position for each class (4 positions)
- Garden Coordinator – one position
- Year-End Party Planner – 3-4 positions
- **A position on the Discovery Time Committee:** Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary, Registrar, Volunteer Coordinator, Fundraising Coordinator(s), Communications Coordinator, members at large (sub committee and event planning)

Please note that available positions may change.

Food Policy and Allergies

Snack time is an important part of the day, allowing children to practice good eating habits, table manners, self-help skills, and general social skills.

Please provide a light, nutritious snack for your child, something that won’t require a lot of time to eat. The snack should be in a small container (i.e., a bag, lunchbox, plastic container) that’s easy for your child to handle. If you want your child’s drink at snack time to be water, be sure to pack a cup in his/her snack bag! Please label all containers, utensils and the child’s snack bag with your child’s name. Please provide a reusable napkin in your child’s snack bag to be used as a placemat.

Children are given the choice as to how much of their snack they wish to eat. Uneaten snack items will be sent home, provided we can seal the container it came in. Containers with foil lids or peel back plastic will be placed in the garbage or recycle bin.

We request that you do not include nuts, whole grapes, hard candies, toffees, or wieners for your child’s snack, as these foods present a choking hazard to young children. Hard whole carrots and grapes should be cut lengthwise to minimize the choking risk.

Unless notified otherwise, Discovery Time Preschool is NUT FREE. There may be additional foods that

are prohibited because of allergies; teaching staff will ensure that an updated allergy list is posted in the school kitchen. Please contact the teaching staff if you are unsure about any item you wish to provide for your child's snack or for your child's birthday.

Illness

Covid Screening

- Parents and children must not enter the preschool space if they have any symptoms of COVID-19.
- Parents must complete a screening tool for their child every morning to ensure the child is able to enter the building. The screening tool is found through this link:
<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/56c020ed-1782-4c6c-bfdd-5af36754471f/resource/58957831-a4ab-45ff-9a8e-3c6af7c1622e/download/covid-19-information-alberta-health-daily-checklist-2021-08.pdf>
- Procedures will be in place to isolate any child who develops symptoms while at preschool, and parents will be notified to pick up the child immediately.

Other Considerations

- Allergy symptoms do not require exclusion from class unless the child is lethargic and unable to participate in class activities.
- If your child has a condition that may be contagious, please visit a doctor before sending him/her to school. If your child contracts a contagious illness, please let the teacher know so that other families may be alerted.
- In cases of head lice, children may return to school after all lice and nits (eggs) have been removed and treated. Please inform the teacher of your child's condition as dress-up clothes, stuffed animals, and upholstered furniture will need to be cleaned appropriately. It is important that you continue to check your child's head even after treatment, as nits can easily be missed and re-infection can occur if other children in the class have had lice as well. Please ensure that all bedding, stuffed animals, furniture, rugs, and clothing within your home have been treated as per Capital Health guidelines (available online at www.capitalhealth.ca/YourHealth/default.htm; search for "Head Lice").

Incident/Accident

An incident refers to:

- a serious illness or injury to a child that occurs while the child is attending the preschool program, or
- any other occurrence while a child is attending the program that may seriously affect the health, safety or well-being of the child.

Incidents may result in immediate or potential physical or emotional harm. Staff members are required to report the following incidents or accidents to our licensing officer:

- an emergency evacuation or program closure due to an emergency;
- an intruder on the preschool premises;
- a child removed from the program without parent/guardian consent;
- an injury requiring medical attention;
- a lost child or a child left on the preschool premises after operating hours.

Other minor injuries or incidents will be noted in the child's file and communicated to parents, but an incident report will not be forwarded to our licensing officer.

In the case of a severe medical emergency, the teachers will first contact 911, then the parent, and then the child's family physician.

PLEASE NOTE: In the event of a serious accident or illness involving your child, if we are unable to contact you or the emergency contact listed on your child's registration form, your child will be transported to the Royal Alexandra Hospital at 10240 Kingsway Avenue. Parents will be responsible for bearing any costs associated with ambulance transportation, if the teacher deems this form of transportation necessary.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency, the teacher will organize children by lining them up and leading them out of the school by the nearest exit. The last person out of the classroom (the parent volunteer for that day) will close the classroom doors and check the bathrooms for children. The teacher must bring the portable record and take attendance as soon as all children are gathered outside the preschool building.

If the emergency requires relocation to a different facility, children will be brought to

Westmount Community Hall 10978-127 Street

If the Community League is closed for any reason, we will relocate to:

Westglen Elementary School 10950-127 Street (780) 454-3449